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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NOUAKCHOTT 000336

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [MR](#)

SUBJECT: SENEGALESE MEDIATION: FNDD AND RFD STILL COMMITTED
DESPITE DISCOURAGING SIGNS

REF: A. NOUAKCHOTT 253

[1](#)B. NOUAKCHOTT 323

Classified By: Ambassador Mark M. Boulware for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: FNDD and RFD emissaries told Ambassador that they remain committed to the Senegalese mediation, which they described as the "last opportunity" to reach a consensual agreement. Nevertheless, Aziz has sent discouraging signs by not responding to their calls to suspend the elections and liberate political prisoners by the May 17 deadline. The FNDD and RFD want the Senegalese mediation to continue under international community auspices and asked the US to request that France, the African Union and international partners put pressure on Aziz to negotiate. They would also like the International Contact Group and France to declare publicly that they will not recognize the elections. End summary.

THE FRIDAY MEETING

[1](#)2. (C) In a meeting May 17 with the Ambassador, FNDD co-leader and UFP President Mohamed Ould Maouloud and RFD Vice-President Mohamed Abderrahmane Ould Moine stated that the FNDD and RFD had accepted to go into the May 15 meeting without any pre-conditions. Maouloud explained that this concession was aimed at creating favorable conditions for a first contact between contending factions. Nevertheless, beyond this trust-building encounter, Ould Maouloud said that the FNDD and RFD had imposed two pre-conditions necessary for a second meeting. The first would be the suspension of General Aziz's unilateral electoral agenda and the second the liberation of political prisoners. They requested that Aziz's camp give them a response by May 17 before noon to allow the FNDD and RFD to prepare for the second meeting and cancel, as a sign of good faith, a massive demonstration scheduled for May 18.

[1](#)3. (C) Ould Maouloud was concerned that as of the afternoon of May 17, the AU and Senegalese mediators had not heard back from Aziz. They had heard discouraging rumors that pointed at Aziz's unwillingness to negotiate. Alarmed by Aziz's silence, the FNDD and RFD had continued planning their march

but decided to request the US's assistance in pressuring the international community to make an urgent call "against the mediation's failure." They would also like the mediation to move forward under the international community's wing, as the International Contact Group's decision called for a consensual solution as the only way out of the crisis. Ould Moine echoed Ould Maouloud's concerns. He asked the Ambassador to act quickly to pressure the international community into stressing to Aziz that failure to negotiate was unacceptable.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador asked Ould Maouloud and Ould Moine whether they had contacted AU Commission President Jean Ping. They responded they had not and said their Ambassador in Addis Ababa had said AU Peace and Security Commissioner Ramtane Lamamra would come to Nouakchott next week. They both agreed that the African Union had kept a low profile during the mediation, which was mostly run by the Senegalese. At the May 15 meeting, the international community had been represented by UN SRSF for West Africa Said Djinnit but he played a minor role.

¶5. (C) Ould Maouloud asked the Ambassador to suggest that the International Contact Group release a communique tomorrow stating that they will not recognize the elections. He also wants the Ambassador to intervene with France to convince them to reject the election. Comment: A French change of heart seems highly unlikely in light of a French Foreign Ministry spokesman's statements on May 14 saying France "thinks it is important that these elections take place and

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that they be inclusive. France and the overwhelming majority of the international community believe that holding these elections is crucial for Mauritania." End comment. The FNDD and the RFD would also want the AU's Peace and Security Council to announce that sanctions will be applied starting June 6 if Aziz moves forward with his agenda.

¶6. (C) Ould Maouloud and Ould Moine concurred that if the General starts his campaign as planned on May 21, "things will get very complicated for everybody." They highlighted that "unilateral actions would be strongly rejected" by the opposition. Ould Moine, as if to warn the Ambassador about possible violence, stated that an authorized march had been violently repressed last week and that they did not know how the authorities would react to the planned May 18 march. Note: That march, according to Ould Moine and several media outlets, has been authorized. End note.

¶7. (C) The men stated they were meeting May 18 with the Embassy of France. The Ambassador reassured them he would see what he could do on their behalf but cautioned that coordinated international action normally took time. He stressed a joint US, AU and international community action would be necessary as he did not think the US alone could have much of an impact. He stated that maybe members of the AU Peace and Security Council that had shown a certain independence could be contacted. The men suggested that the Ambassador contact Senegal, Qatar and Libya. They stressed that Libya would respond positively to a US request.

¶8. (C) Comment: Some local media outlets reported May 17 that the Air Mauritanie case involving Prime Minister Waghef and three other anti-coup activists (Ref A) will be transferred to the Supreme Court on May 18. Reportedly the Supreme Court will hear the detainees' appeal, order their immediate temporary release, and remove the bail requirement (currently set at 100 million ouguiyas, or approximately \$380,000 US). Such a move would fulfill one of the opposition's main prerequisites for beginning any serious dialogue and would signal Aziz is "throwing them a bone."

¶9. (C) Comment continued: If Aziz is unwilling to negotiate, it will be extremely difficult for the US to assist the FNDD in extending the Senegalese mediation's life.

It is regrettable, and shows a certain lack of vision on their part, that two weeks ago the FNDD and RFD declined the Ambassador's offer to intervene with the Senegalese towards a productive negotiation. At the time, FNDD and RFD declared themselves skeptical of Senegalese efforts (Ref B). Nonetheless, as the Senegalese mediation represents the last best chance for a consensual solution to the Mauritanian crisis before the junta organized elections, it is important that the US make every effort to keep these talks alive.
End comment.
BOULWARE